

David J. Leffell, MD

March 15, 2013

The Honorable Senator Terry B. Gerratana
Chairman, Public Health Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 3000
Hartford, CT 06106
The Honorable Representative Susan Johnson
Chairman, Public Health Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 5007
Hartford, CT 06106

Members of the Public Health Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly
Re: **S.B. No. 872 *AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF INDOOR TANNING
DEVICES BY PERSONS UNDER EIGHTEEN YEARS OF AGE.***

Dear Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson, and members of the Public Health Committee:

I am writing in regard to S.B. 872, an act that seeks to limit the access of minors, those under the age of 18 to tanning beds in commercial establishments. I am the founder and director of the Cutaneous Oncology Program at the Yale School of Medicine and am responsible for the clinical and research enterprise that treats more than 4,000 patients a year from all corners of our state who have skin cancer and melanoma. Our research program has defined important elements of the science and public health issues related to skin cancer and melanoma and is internationally recognized for our contributions to the medical literature and public education regarding the dangers of artificial tanning booths. It is on the basis of my direct scientific and clinical knowledge of the impact of ultraviolet radiation that I have formed my view that minors should be prohibited access to commercial tanning parlors.

As you may know, skin cancer is now epidemic. The evidence linking ultraviolet radiation to both melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancer is incontrovertible. In addition, research done by our team at Yale, and others around the world, has confirmed the specific impact of artificial tanning beds on the health of young people. In my own practice, it is not uncommon to consult with a patient less than 30 years of age who has developed skin cancer. I should note that prior to the widespread use of artificial tanning beds, skin cancer in this population was almost unheard of. Animal research data, epidemiologic data, clinical experience, and hypothesis driven laboratory research all confirm the carcinogenic nature of artificial tanning beds. The mechanism by which ultraviolet radiation causes skin

cancer is perhaps one of the best understood in the world of cancer biology.

As an individual who has focused his professional career on the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of and research into the causes of skin cancer, I am especially hopeful that Connecticut can play a leadership role in protecting our children from the extremely harmful effects of artificial ultraviolet radiation that is emitted by devices available to them in tanning parlors throughout the state. The World Health Organization in their landmark report on ultraviolet radiation in 2006, cited evidence that the ultraviolet radiation from commercial bulbs used in tanning parlors can be up to 10 to 15 times more intense than that from natural sunlight under standard conditions. The general public is not aware of this nor are they aware of the significant health risk that commercial tanning poses. From my perspective as a physician and researcher, public policy must mirror the approach we have taken with respect to cigarettes and minors. As a matter of law, we do not allow minors to purchase cigarettes because we recognize they represent a specific and well-defined risk to their health. In a similar vein, intentional exposure to artificial ultraviolet radiation should be similarly reflected in public policy and the law. I should note that ultraviolet radiation is recognized as a carcinogen by the federal Environmental Protection Agency. While it would be preferable to develop a public view of tanning that is similar to our attitude towards cigarette smoking, we can at least take steps now to protect minors from the harmful effects of unnatural ultraviolet radiation.

Connecticut is in a position to join California, Vermont, New York and other states in adopting legislation that will reduce the exposure of children to the cancer-causing effects of artificial ultraviolet radiation. The legislation should define a complete prohibition of the use of commercial tanning parlors by those under age 18. Those of us in health care generally and specifically in dermatology and academics will continue to do our part to educate the public and develop new preventative health approaches. However, I call on our legislative leaders to do their part in the fight against melanoma and other skin cancers.

Thank you for considering this important public health issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Leffell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

David J. Leffell, MD